



History of the Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve (1771-Present Day)

When Jamie Gamble first drove down Loomis Street from Massachusetts into North Granby, he was captivated by this undeveloped stretch of land. There were no driveways, no houses, no power lines – just wilderness. “It was like I’d walked through the wardrobe into Narnia,” he said. “It was this incredible natural passage.”

He was not the first to be struck by the natural beauty of this corridor. And, thanks to his preservation efforts, he won’t be the last.

From Farm, to Summer Retreat, to Wildlife Preserve

A small cemetery marks the final resting place of members of the Day Family, who farmed this land for four generations, from 1771 through 1887 and, according to early land records, operated first a cider mill and then a sawmill here – the remains of which can still be seen. Stone walls tell us that when the Days lived here, much of this land was pasture. An old foundation near the road is rumored to have been the site of an old tavern.

In the early 1900s – a time when Hartford was arguably the most affluent city in America – a number of wealthy urban families purchased property in Granby, North Granby and West Granby to use as summer retreats. One such family was the Glaziers. Robert C. Glazier lived in West Hartford and was the president of Society for Savings. He and his wife, Mary Skinner Chapin Glazier, purchased the old Day

Farm in 1930 and hired Hilding Stevenson, a neighboring dairy farmer, to build a cabin and an outhouse on the property. The cabin, built overlooking the pond, still stands today (thanks to some recent help from Jamie Gamble and the Land Trust) and, sitting on its front porch, it is easy to imagine what life was like there in 1930. While so much has changed in the outside world, in here – incredibly – not much has changed at all.

Hilding had a son named Olof. Just three years old when his father started looking after the Glazier property, Olof grew up working on the family farm and helping his father as property caretaker, eventually taking over the reins. Olof loved this property as if it were his own. When the Glaziers passed away, they left the property to their niece, Elizabeth Loomis Glazier Creamer of Farmington, and she asked Olof to continue on as caretaker. He was happy to. “That property was his life,” says Olof’s daughter, Karen Saunders. “He spent a lot of time there.”

Karen got to spend a lot of time there, too, riding her horse on the trails, fishing in the pond, and sledding and ice skating in the winter.

Elizabeth Creamer, likewise, loved the property and, in 1975, donated 48 acres on the East side of Loomis Street to the Nature Conservancy who, with her approval, turned it over to the Granby Land Trust for permanent protection. The Creamer Preserve was one of the GLT’s first big acquisitions and helped establish our standing as a reputable, trustworthy organization – and we are forever grateful to her for this magnificent gift. A year later, Elizabeth gave the remaining property to her daughter, Cordelia Glazier Creamer Richards, who lived in New York City. Obviously, living in New York City made frequent visits difficult, and Cordelia needed a caretaker. Olof was happy to continue in his role.

In 1992 Jamie Gamble moved to North Granby. He bought a house and some agricultural land on Loomis Street and before long he began to grow hay. Olof, now 65 years old, became an invaluable mentor to him. “He was the old timer,” says Jamie. “I think he was amused by my efforts, but he really appreciated that I was working the land.” Olof taught Jamie many valuable lessons and became a cherished friend.

In 2005 Cordelia Richards decided it was time to sell the remainder of her family’s Loomis Street property. Jamie Gamble was interested. When he saw it for the first time, he was amazed. “I walked the ridgeline, saw all of this untouched, hardwood forest, then got to the pond and felt like I was in the Adirondacks.” Jamie knew he wanted to buy the property, but first he wanted to run the idea by his friend Olof. The Glaziers, Creamers and Richardsons all had enjoyed the property over the years, but the one constant on that property – for nearly 75 years – was Olof. His opinion mattered.

Olof not only approved of the idea but agreed to continue on as caretaker. He proceeded to spend the last year of his life working alongside Jamie to make improvements to the property. “We had a great working relationship,” says Jamie. “We spent a lot of time together.” When Olof passed away in 2006, Jamie was stunned. “It was a huge loss,” he says. “He was a good friend.” Jamie now funds an annual award at the Land Trust’s art show in memory of Olof.

The Land

The property encompasses steep woodlands, old farm fields, a high-quality scrub-shrub wetland complex bordering Dismal Brook, a vernal pool, and a 1.7± acre pond. It is part of a large forest block that supports a variety of mammals and other wildlife. Bird surveys conducted on the parcel since 2007 have documented 134 species including Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Sora, and Little Blue Heron.

Permanent Preservation

From the moment he bought the property, Jamie had a plan for it, although he did not talk about it much. “One only has to look around North Granby to see what would’ve happened here if nothing had been done,” says Jamie. “I really wanted to keep this amazing piece of land in its natural state.”

In 2020, Jamie gifted all 210 acres of land to the Granby Land Trust. Of the Granby Land Trust, Jamie says, “There is a wonderful legacy of preservation in Granby,” says Jamie. “The town is unique in its appreciation and preservation of land and landscape. I think it’s unique in that.”

Of his gift, he says, “Look at this beautiful property. I am fortunate to be able to preserve it. How could I not?”